DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 157 CS 504 584

AUTHOR Pearson, Judy C.; Turner, Lynn H.
TITLE The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension: Predictive Validity and Behavioral Correlates.
PUB DATE Mar 84
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (75th, Philadelphia, PA, March 8-11, 1984). Portions may not reproduce clearly due to small print.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; College Students; *Communication Apprehension; Communication Problems; Communication Skills; Higher Education; Peer Evaluation; *Perception; *Predictor Variables; *Public Speaking; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); Speech Communication; Test Reviews; *Test Validity
IDENTIFIERS *Self Report Measures

ABSTRACT

To determine the criterion related validity of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA), 156 college students enrolled in a beginning public speaking course were administered the PRCA and asked to evaluate peers' speeches using a standard evaluation form. Offering support for the PRCA's validity, results showed a correlation between communication apprehensives' self-reports and peer evaluations. Student evaluators perceived people reporting high levels of communication apprehension as speaking too softly, providing long pauses for no apparent reason, having a shaking voice, apologizing for their message, not responding to their audience, blushing, and having trembling hands. They also evaluated high communication apprehensives more negatively than their peers, seeing them as less credible, less attractive, less likely to influence opinions, and less effective in communication. Behaviors reported by peers fell into three sets of behaviors, indicating either tension, lack of assertion, or excessive concern with self. (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED243157

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension: Predictive Validity and Behavioral Correlates

Judy C. Pearson
Associate Professor
School of Interpersonal Communication
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701
614/594-5583

and

Lynn H. Turner
Ph. D. Candidate
Department of Communication Studies
Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois 60201
312/492-7532

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Judy C. Pearson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Submitted to the Interpersonal and Organizational Communication Division of the Eastern Communication Association for the 75th Anniversary Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 8-11, 1984.

CS 504 584

Researchers in communication and psychology have been concerned for over four decades with the nature and effects of speech anxiety. Early research (Gilkinson, 1942; Clevenger, 1959) concentrated on stage fright, a construct focused on the anxiety associated with public communication. Recently, this interest has encompassed communication contexts other than public speaking. Reticence (Phillips, 1968, 1980), unwillingness to communicate (Burgoon, 1976), communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1970), shyness (Zimbardo, 1977), and predispositions toward verbal behavior (Mortensen, Arntson, and Lustig, 1977) are all similar constructs. These constructs reflect communication researchers intense interest in this area of inquiry, an area that has generated more research in the past decade than almost any other area of research in the speech communication field (McCroskey, 1981).

The construct of communication apprehension appears in the majority of investigations about speech anxiety. Communication apprehension (CA) refers to the anxiety or fear an individual associates with real or anticipated oral communication. High levels of communication apprehension correlate with a number of personal difficulties. Communication apprehension affects occupational choice and desirability (Daly & McCroskey, 1975). High communication apprehensives are offered fewer personnel interviews, are viewed more negatively in the interviews in which they do participate (Daly, Richmond, and Leth, 1979), and are more likely to be dissatisfied on the job along the dimension of supervision (Falcione, McCroskey, & Daly, 1977)

than are low apprehensives. High apprehensives rate lower in self-reports of self-esteem (McCroskey, Daly, Richmond, and Falcione, 1977; McCroskey, Daly, and Sorenson, 1976); are evaluated lower in interpersonal attractiveness (McCroskey, Daly, Ricmond, and Cox, 1975); are perceived more negatively by peers in credibility, attractiveness, and desirability as potential opinion leaders (McCroskey and Richmond, 1976); and are perceived by the receiver as less effective communicators (Freimuth, 1976). McCroskey (1976) indicated that high apprehensives will have less influence on their peers regardless of the quality of their ideas; their nonverbal behaviors guide them to fewer interactions than their less anxious counterparts.

The inevitable inference supported by much of this research is that communication apprehension is dysfunctional. This inference is clearest in the literature examining the relationship between communication apprehension and various aspects of the academic experience. In general, research in this area has confirmed the supposition that high communication apprehension is related to negative academic outcomes. A relationship exists between communication apprehension and (1) student attitudes toward education (Hurt & Preiss, 1978; McCroskey & Sheahan, 1978; Scott & Wheeless, 1977); (2) student evaluation in the classroom (McCroskey, 1977a); (3) student preferences for instructional settings and methods (Scott & Wheeless, 1977; Pearson & Yoder, 1980); (4) teacher expectations (McCroskey & Daly, 1976; Smythe & Powers, 1978);

and (5) student academic achievement (McCroskey & Andersen, 1976; Powers & Smythe, 1980; Scott & Wheeless, 1977). The picture that emerges from these studies is primarily negative and seems to justify McCroskey's (1977b) claim that highly apprehensive students will be negatively impacted in their academic lives.

The validity of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) has been demonstrated by a number of researchers, and many of these studies were summarized by McCroskey (1978). While Parks (1980) recently reintroduced the issue of validity, McCroskey (1983) nullified his criticisms. Essentially, Parks argued that the PRCA is not an appropriate operationalization of the CA construct as a generalized trait of an individual. Apparently, the PRCA is a generally valid instrument.

Predictive validity, or criterion-related validity, has not been examined as often as other forms of validity. Six studies have shown that high oral communication apprehensives do engage in less oral communication behavior than do low oral communication apprehensives (Wells & Lashbrook, 1970; Sorenson & McCroskey, 1977; Hamilton, 1972; Weiner, 1973; Fenton & Hopf, 1976; Glogower, 1977). Wells and Lashbrook (1970) and Weiner (1973) determined that the comments of high communication apprehensives in a small group setting are less relevant than are the comments of those with low apprehension. Sorenson & McCroskey (1977) found that high communication apprehensives

exhibit more tension in a small group than do those with low communication apprehension. Powers (1977) determined that high communication apprehensives used more rhetorical interrogatives. Finally, Jablin & Sussman (1978) found that fewer original ideas were produced by high apprehensives than by low apprehensives in the small group setting.

Predictive validity has focused on interpersonal communication to a greater extent than on public speaking, even though the construct of CA originally had public speaking as its target. While little has been done to determine the predictive validity of the PRCA in the public speaking context, we would expect that the instrument would demonstrate a relationship with public speaking behaviors. This expectation is true especially given the arguments provided by McCroskey (1983) concerning the cross-situational consistency of the instrument.

The purpose of this study is to determine the criterion-related validity of the PRCA in the beginning public speaking course. Nunnally (1978) observes that this form of validity "is at issue when the purpose is to use an instrument to estimate some important form of behavior that is external to the measuring instrument itself, the latter being referred to as the criterion" (p. 87). The predictive validity of the PRCA has been studied in research already cited, and the small group and dyadic context studies do provide insight. However, we agree with McCroskey (1978) who writes ". . . considerably more research concerning this proposition is needed (that the oral

communication behaviors of high communication aprehensives differ from those with low communication apprehension)" and we might add that it is particularly relevant in the public speaking context.

METHOD

SUBJECTS

One hundred-fifty-six college students, 96 men and 60 women, at a large midwestern university, participated as the subjects in this study. Each student was enrolled in a beginning public speaking course.

PROCEDURE

Administering the PRCA and evaluating peers were routine procedures in the basic public speaking class. Each class included 22 students with five speaking assignments. Normally students completed the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) on the first day of class and typically they were assigned to evaluate the speaking of their classmates. For purposes of this study, each student was randomly assigned to evaluate the behavioral characteristics of other speakers on a standard evaluation form. In all cases, the fourth speech in the course was used as the object of evaluation.

MEASURES

The PRCA is the most widely used instrument to measure communication apprehension. After a decade of use, McCroskey (1981) presented a new version of the instrument which allowed researchers to tap apprehension in four separate contexts.

These contexts include a group, a meeting, a dyad, and the public setting. Each context is represented with six items resulting in a total of 24 items; each item is placed on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability and validity of the original instrument have been widely documented and are summarized by McCroskey (1978).

A survey of the literature on communication apprehension and the verbal and nonverbal indicators of fear helped to create an evaluation form. A balance was attempted among the items to examine extraneous verbalization, vocal characteristics and qualities, eye contact, facial expression, and bodily movement. The twenty-item instrument is provided in Table 1.

(INSERT TABLE 1 HERE.)

RESULTS

This study examines the evaluations of the speeches of one hundred-fifty-six college students. Approximately 15 peers evaluated each speech. Absenteeism, incomplete data, and other discrepancies resulted in some speeches being evaluated by more observers and some speeches being evaluated by fewer observers. The potential problem that these differences in sample size could cause was solved by calculating the mean response to each of the twenty behavioral categories and using those means in the statistical analysis. Thus, each of the 156 speeches has twenty associated mean observations, one mean representing each of the twenty behaviors. The means and standard deviations for the entire sample of 156 speeches are provided in Table 2. The

reliability for the new version of the

(INSERT TABLE 2 HERE.)

PRCA was calculated by Cronbach's coefficient alpha in the present investigation and was found to be .81. Cronbach's coefficient alpha resulted in a reliability of .75 for the evaluation instrument.

correlation coefficients among the 20 behavioral items and the four separate communication contexts were used to show any significant relationships between the 20 behavioral indices of communication apprehension and the PRCA. Significant correlations occurred on 7 of the behavioral measures. Table 3 provides these correlation coefficients with their related significance levels.

(INSERT TABLE 3 HERE.)

DISCUSSION

This investigation offers support for the criterion-related validity of the PRCA in the public speaking context in the beginning speech communication course. When receivers observe persons with high communication apprehension, they appear to observe behaviors which correlate with the speaker's own report of his or her communication apprehension. Persons who report high levels of communication apprehension tend to be perceived as speaking too softly, providing long pauses for no reason, having a shaking voice, apologizing for their message, not responding to their audience when they speak, blushing, and exhibiting trembling hands.

In general, high communication apprehensives are perceived more negatively by peers: they are seen as less credible, less attractive, and less desirable as potential opinion leaders (McCroskey and Richmond, 1976), and receivers perceive them as less effective communicators (Freimuth, 1976). Students who report higher levels of communication apprehension tend to receive lower evaluations in the classroom (McCroskey, 1977a). This study suggests some of the behaviors which comprise the rationale for a lower evaluation. In addition, McCroskey (1976) indicated that high apprehensives will have less influence on their peers, due in large part to their nonverbal behaviors which guide them to engage in fewer interactions than their less anxious counterparts. This investigation suggests that some of those nonverbal behaviors which are perceived by other communicators such as a soft and shaking voice, long pauses for no reason, and a lack of responsiveness may contribute to reduced interaction. The behavioral correlates of communication apprehension determined in this study add precision to previously reported findings.

Those behaviors which receivers perceive in their observations of high communication apprehensive persons may be divided into three sets of behaviors: those that indicate tension or nervousness (shaking voice, blushing, and trembling hands), those that indicate a lack of assertion (voice too soft to be heard, long pauses for no reason, and apologizing for the speech), and those that suggest excessive concern with self (a

lack of response to audience during the speech). Receivers do not report excessive volume, verbosity, or movement in their observations of high communication apprehensive speakers. Instead, a lack of energy, enthusiasm, and dynamism appears to mark their observations.

These three sets of behavior are consistent with previous research. Nervousness has been suggested as one behavioral sign of communication apprehension. Sorenson & McCroskey (1977) found that high communication apprehensives exhibit more tension in a small group than do those with low communication apprehension. In the current investigation, tension was observed in the behavioral signs of a shaking voice, blushing, and trembling hands.

Persons who report high communication apprehension appear to be unassertive. Pearson (1979) demonstrated that the earlier version of the PRCA included a dimension that was common to a dimension of unassertiveness. This dimension which she identified as being apprehensive in interpersonal communication settings included being tense in group discussions, nervous in conversations, self-conscious in class, hesitant to date because of shyness, the feeling of strained posture when communicating and not enjoying initiating conversations. In this study, behavioral cues such as voice too soft to be heard, long pauses for no reason, and apologizing for the speech provide the receiver with a rationale for concluding that the speaker is unassertive.

Self-consciousness, or excessive concern with self, has not been demonstrated to be a behavioral correlate of communication apprehension in prior empirical research. Nonetheless, a frequently offered antidote to the fear one experiences in communication settings is to focus on the other person, or other people, in the situation. Intuitively, then, the relationship between a lack of responsiveness to the audience and communication apprehension might be predicted.

Prior studies have established the reliability and the validity of the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension. However, the predictive validity of the instrument has been relatively neglected in the public speaking context. This investigation demonstrates that the PRCA does hold predictive validity in receiver's perceptions of public speakers: persons who report high levels of communication apprehension tend to be perceived as speaking too softly, providing long pauses for no reason, having a shaking voice, apologizing for their message, not responding to their audience when they speak, blushing, and exhibiting trembling hands. The reliance upon the PRCA in communication research is not unwarranted.

REFERENCES

Burgoon, J. K. The unwillingness to communicate scale: Development and validation. Communication Monographs, 1976, 43, 60-69.

Clevenger, T., Jr. A synthesis of experimental research in stage fright. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 1959, 45, 134-145.

Daly J. A. & McCroskey, J. C. Occupational choice and desirability as a function of communication apprehension. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1975, 22, 309-313.

Daly, J. A., Richmond, V. P. and Leth, S. Social communicative anxiety and the personnel selection process: Testing the similarity effect in selection decisions. Human Communication Research, 1979, 6, 18-32.

Falcione, R. L., McCroskey, J. C., & Daly, J. A. Job satisfaction as a function of employees' communication apprehension, self-esteem, and perceptions of their immediate supervisor. In B. Ruben (Ed.), Communication Yearbook I, New Brunswick, N. J.: Transaction Books, 1977, 363-375.

Fenton, R. J. & Hopf, T. S. Some effects of communication inhibition on small groups: Participation, member satisfaction, perceived effectiverness, credibility, and leadership. Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association convention. San Francisco, 1976.

Freimuth, V. S. The effects of communication apprehension on communication effectiveness. Human Communication Research, 1976, 2, 289-298.

Gilkinson, H. Social fears as reported by students in college speech classes. Speech Monographs, 1942, 9, 141-160.

Glogower, F. D. A component analysis of cognitive restructuring as applied to the reduction of communication apprehension. Ph. D. dissertation, West Virginia University, 1977.

Hamilton, P. R. The effect of risk proneness on small group interaction, communication apprehension, and self-disclosure. M. S. thesis, Illinois State University, 1972.

Hurt H. T. & Preiss, R. Silence isn't necessarily golden: Communication apprehension, desired social choice and academic success among middle school children. Human Communication Research, 1978, 4, 314-328.

Jablin, F. M. & Sussman, L. An exploration of communication and productivity in real brainstorming groups. Human Communication Research, 1978,

McCroskey, J. C. Classroom consequences of communication apprehension. Communication Education, 1977a, 26, 27-33.

McCroskey, J. C. Cross-situational consistency of the PRCA: Another View. Paper presented at the Western Speech Communication Association convention, Albuquerque, 1983.

McCroskey, J. C. The effects of communication apprehension on nonverbal behavior. Communication Quarterly, 1976, 24, 39-44.

McCroskey, J. C. Measures of communication-bound anxiety. Speech Monographs, 1970, 37, 269-277.

McCroskey, J. C. Oral communication apprehension: Reconceptualizatoin and a new look at measurement. Paper presented to the Central States Speech Association convention. Chicago, Illinois, 1981.

McCroskey, J. C. Oral Communication apprehension: A summary of recent theory and research. Human Communication Research, 1977b, 4, 78-96.

McCroskey, J. C. Validity of the PRCA as an Index of Oral Communication Apprehension. Communication Monographs, 1978, 45, 192-203.

McCroskey J. C. & Andersen, J. F. The relationship between communication apprehension and academic achievement among college students. Human Communication Research, 1976, 3, 73-81.

McCroskey J. C. & Daly, J. A. Teachers' expectations of the communication apprehensive child in the elementary school. Human Communication Research, 1975, 2, 51-65.

McCroskey J. C. and Richmond, V. P. The effects of communication apprehension on the perception of peers. Western Speech Communication Journal, 1976, 40, 14-21.

McCroskey J. C. & Sheahan, M. E. Communication apprehension, social preference and social behavior in a college environment. Communication Quarterly, 1978, 26, 41-45.

McCroskey, J. C., Daly, J. A., Richmond, V. P., and Falcione, R. L. Studies of the relationship between communication apprehension and self-esteem. Human Communication Research, 1977, 3, 269-277.

McCroskey, J. C., Daly, J. A., and Sorenson, G. A. Personality correlates of communication apprehension. Human Communication Research, 1976, 2, 376-380.

McCroskey, J. C., Daly, J. A., Richmond, V. P., and Cox, B. G. The effects of communication apprehension on interpersonal attraction. Huma Communication Research, 1975, 2, 51-65.

Mortensen, C. D., Arntson, P. H., & Lustig, M. The measurement of verbal predispositions: Scale development and application. Human Communication Research, 1977, 3, 146-158.

Nunnally, J. C. Psychometric Theory. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.

Parks, M. R. A test of the cross-situational consistency of communication apprehension. Communication Monographs, 1980, 47, 220-232.

Pearson, J. C. A factor analytic study of the items in the Rathus assertiveness schedule and the personal report of communication apprehension. Psychological Reports, 1979, 45, 491-497.

Pearson, J. C. and Yoder, D. D. Preferences and perceptions of the high communication aprehensive student toward public speaking and interpersonal communication. Iowa Journal of Speech Communication, Spring 1980, 12, 16-24.

Phillips, G. M. On apples and onions: A reply to Page. Communication Education, 1980, 29, 105-108.

Phillips, G. M. Reticence: Pathology of the normal speaker. Speech Monographs, 1968, 35, 39-49.

Powers, W. G. The rhetorical interrogative: Anxiety or control? Human Communication Research, 1977, 4, 44-47.

Powers, W. G. & Smythe, M. J. Communication apprehension and achievement in a performance-oriented basic communication course. Human Communication Research, 1980, 6, 146-152.

Scott, M. D. & Wheeless, L. R. Communication apprehension, student attitudes and levels of satisfaction. Western Journal of Speech Communication, 1977, 41, 188-199.

Smythe, M. J. & Powers, W. G. When Galatea is apprehensive: The effect of communication apprehension on teacher expectation. In B. Ruben (Ed.), Communication Yearbook II, New Brunswick, N. J.: Transaction Books, 1978, 487-491.

Sorenson, G. A. & McCroskey, J. C. The prediction of interaction behavior in small groups: Zero history versus intact groups. Communication Monographs, 1977, 44, 73-80.

Weiner, A. N. Machiavellianism as a predictor of group interaction and cohesion. M. A. thesis, West Virginia University, 1973.

Wells, J. A. & Lashbrook, W. B. A study of the effects of systematic desensitization of the communicative anxiety of individuals in small groups. Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association convention. New Orleans, 1970.

Zimbardo, P. G. Synesa. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1977.

TABLE 1

EVALUATION FORM FOR SPEAKERS

Please indicate the degree to which the speaker exhibited the behaviors in his/her speech by using the following scale: (1) never or almost never, (2) occasionaly, (3) somewhat frequently, (4) frequently, (5) always or almost always.

1. Use of filler words--"um," "uh"
2. Repetition of any generalization--"like that..." "and so on..."
3. Rapid speaking rate.
4. Voice too soft to be heard.
5. Voice too loud for the situation.
6. Comments made under breath.
7. Shaking voice.
8. Shortness of breath.
9. Long pauses for no reason.
10. Lack of eye contact with audience.
11. Reading directly from cards.
12. Tapping note cards, pens, etc. on podium.
13. Twisting note cards in hands.
14. Blushing.
15. Shifting weight from foot to foot.
16. Trembling hands.
17. Wringing hands.
18. Shaking knees
19. Apologizing for the speech.
20. Lack of response to audience during the speech.

TABLE 2

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF ITEMS IN THE EVALUATION FORM

(In this form, 1=never or almost never, 2=occasionaly, 3= somewhat frequently, 4=frequently, 5=always or almost always.

		MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
1.	Use of filler words--"um," "uh"	1.86	.657
2.	Repetition of any generalization --"like that..." "and so on..."	1.42	.359
3.	Rapid speaking rate.	1.53	.566
4.	Voice too soft to be heard.	1.84	.311
5.	Voice too loud for the situation.	1.05	.123
6.	Comments made under breath.	1.14	.189
7.	Shaking voice.	1.41	.363
8.	Shortness of breath.	1.30	.262
9.	Long pauses for no reason.	1.38	.405
10.	Lack of eye contact with audience.	1.69	.552
11.	Reading directly from cards.	1.85	.665
12.	Tapping note cards, pens, etc. on podium.	1.10	.167
13.	Twisting note cards in hands.	1.12	.223
14.	Blushing.	1.10	.168
15.	Shifting weight from foot to foot.	1.71	.594
16.	Trembling hands.	1.20	.262
17.	Wringing hands.	1.15	.303
18.	Shaking knees	1.07	.111
19.	Apologizing for the speech.	1.08	.270
20.	Lack of response to audience during the speech.	1.20	.243

TABLE 3

CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN SEVEN BEHAVIORAL MEASURES AND FOUR COMMUNICATION CONTEXTS OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

		Group	Meeting	Dyad	Public	Overall
Voice too soft to be heard	r =	.33**	.25**	.17*	.24**	.31**
	p	.0001	.0003	.03	.004	.0002
Shaking voice		.17*	.13	.11	.17*	.18*
		.05	.12	.17	.05	.03
Long pauses for no reason		.14	.14	.26**	.20*	.23**
		.10	.10	.002	.02	.006
Blushing		.09	.10	.19*	.13	.16
		.26	.22	.03	.12	.05*
Trembling hands		.16*	.09	.09	.12	.15
		.05	.26	.28	.14	.09
Apologizing for the speech		.12	.09	.22**	.14	.17*
		.14	.24	.01	.09	.04
Lack of response to audience during the speech		.06	.14	.18*	.18*	.17*
		.46	.08	.03	.04	.04